

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

**Group 1**

**Program 2.1**

**Question No. 107**

**Senator Singh asked the following question at the hearing on 24 February 2014:**

This has been a year of great change for the Council - Australia Council Review of 2012, the Mitchell Review of Private Sector Support for the Arts and the National Cultural Policy, Creative Australia – how have these changes been implemented?

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

**Implementation of changes to the Australia Council**

New enabling legislation commenced on 1 July 2013, updating the functions, powers and governance structure of the Australia Council. The new Act also brought the appointment of a skills-based Governing Board, chaired by Mr Rupert Myer AM.

Following the commencement of the new Act, the Australia Council embarked on a series of significant reforms that will equip our organisation to be a stronger advocate for the arts and provide us with the flexibility to respond to the sector's needs. The key areas of reform currently underway are as follows:

- Development of a five year Strategic Plan.
- Development of a new model for the Australia Council grants program to be implemented in 2015.
- Development of a new peer assessment structure to be implemented in May 2014.
- Application of Unfunded Excellence funding in areas where strong demand and a shortfall in funding have been identified.

**Strategic Plan**

The Australia Council is in the final stages of developing a Strategic Plan to articulate our vision and goals for the next five years. The development of the Strategic Plan has been guided by the Review of the Australia Council which involved broad consultation with the sector. The Strategic Plan will be implemented through a rolling Corporate Plan to be endorsed by the Minister for the Arts. Implementation of the Strategic Plan and the Corporate Plan will commence in July 2014.

**New grants model**

The Australia Council is developing a more flexible and streamlined model for our grants program which will increase efficiency and improve access to our funding. The new grants model will have the flexibility to accommodate new and/or multidisciplinary forms of artistic practice.

The development of our new grants model has been informed by a comprehensive review of our grants as well as our current strategic planning process.

The new grants program will be announced in August and implemented in January 2015. In the meantime, existing programs will continue throughout 2014.

**New peer assessment structure**

Funding decisions regarding support for individual artists and arts organisations across all art forms are made by panels of expert artists and arts professionals. In tandem with the development of the new grants model, the Australia Council is implementing a new peer assessment structure that will allow for the establishment of peer panels which respond with greater flexibility to the needs of the sector. These peer panels will be drawn from a large and diverse pool of peers approved by the Australia Council board based on recommendations by the

Nominations and Appointments Committee, chaired by the Australia Council Deputy Chair, Robyn Archer. The new peer assessment structure will come into use in May 2014.